

## MISCELLANEOUS NOTES

### I. ON THE FEEDING HABITS OF BEARS

I wish to bring to the notice of naturalists certain interesting observations of mine, made in June, 1953, on the Kambakam Hill (2,540 ft. above mean sea level). The place is thickly wooded and infested with panthers, bears and other wild animals. Amidst various pugs and other marks found there, one series of markings particularly attracted my attention. These are shallow pits, about a foot and a half long and about half a foot wide, the bottom sloping from the surface at one end to a depth of about three inches at the other end. They are, however, not seen in large numbers; I noticed only two or three on my way. I learnt from the local inhabitants, that such pits are dug by bears. Foot-prints and impressions of nostrils of bears, associated with the pits, also confirm it. A scrutiny of the pits for evidences (at least as impressions) of prior existence of vegetable matter there, has revealed nothing of the kind.

It is known that bears dig up and eat certain underground plant parts, but the shallow pits, made by them in the open, call for an explanation. Surely the bear would not waste its energy by digging at a wrong place. Induced by these thoughts I have made enquiries of my guide and other local inhabitants, on the food habits (known to those people) of bears and the purpose served by the shallow pits. Only one explanation is acceptable to me, and that is that the bear (which eats ants) exposes the moist earth, lying underground, for the ants to gather, and that the animal comes there again for feasting on the ants so gathered. Though it sounds curious, I have not been able to find any better explanation. Perhaps similar observations have been recorded by others?

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[Mr. R. C. Morris comments on the above as follows:—

‘Mr. Chandrasekhar’s description of the diggings is typical of those by bears for grubs and ants’ nests of the type commonly found either under flat stones or hard soil-pans. Bears have an acute sense of smell and can locate grubs even 2 to 3 ft. below ground. Diggings of the same description are made by Ratel in dry stream beds; and also *sometimes* by Pangolin, though usually not so wide as described in Mr. Chandrasekhar’s note.’—Eds.]